**Podcast #94: Seven Players, Exchanging Bananas**

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## Intro [00:00:00]

[funky intro music]

**Matt**: Hello and welcome to the very 94th Shut Up & Sit Down podcast, the podcast that is all about board games and the people who love them. I’m one such person who loves them, my name is Matt Lees, joined as ever by Quintin Smith!

**Quinns**: Hallo Matt Lees!

**Matt**: And for the first time, you may have bumped into her on streams or our reviews online, it’s our intern Kylie Wroe.

**Kylie**: Hello!

**Quinns**: How ya doin’, Kylie?

**Kylie**: I’m good, thank you.

**Quinns**: I’ve been meaning to do this, but now we’re finally on an audio medium. Kylie, who is from the north of England, if you could just open that up and read what it says on the piece of paper, that would be great.

**Kylie**: [sigh] Okay. [paper rustling] You know nothing, Matt Lees.

**Matt**: That’s great. I think you’ve just gone against our bullying contract for *both* of us [Quinns and Kylie laughing] at the same time. I haven’t actually passed around that documentation yet, but I will be doing, and I will be expecting your resignation letter by the end of the day. [Kylie laughing]

**Quinns**: We’ve had Kylie, like you say, on the stream, and reviews. I was expecting more people to be excited that she’s from the north [pronounced “nerth” with an exaggerated imitation of a northern English accent] of England.

**Matt**: I’m from the north of England, as well, you know.

**Quinns**: Yeah, but she’s properly from the North.

**Kylie**: Yeah, no, Matt’s from the midlands. [Matt laughing]

**Quinns**: OOoooooooooooooooh!

**Matt**: Oh, Cheshire is not the midlands. See, this is the nonsense thing about the UK. It doesn't matter how far from the North- We could get someone from Scotland in here, they’d be like, “You’re not from the North.” [Kylie laughing] Then get someone from Greenland in as well. It never ends.

**Quinns**: I would definitely listen to a podcast of you two arguing about whether Matt is from the North or not. Why are people from the North proud of being from the North?

**Matt**: I guess you have to be.

**Kylie**: Yeah.

**Matt**: Because it’s just not as good as the South in many regards, but then you kind of can’t admit that. [laughs]

**Kylie**: I always enjoy when you’re driving on the motorway and you’re just heading to “The North.”

**Quinns**: Yeah, it’s crazy that the signs say that, like something out of Lord of the Rings.

**Matt**: To be real, I think it’s just the fact that the north of England has been so shafted for such a long time that it has lots of things lacking that the South has in abundance, but then really, you can’t do anything about that, so all you can really do is just take some pride in what you have got, and so it means that all of the aspects which you consider to be southern things, the further north you are really comes down to how much less you are southern. It’s mainly because people don’t like London, I think.

**Kylie**: Yeah, I’m considered quite a traitor for moving down south.

**Matt**: Yeah, right? Yeah. Exactly.

**Quinns**: What fun! [Matt laughing] Well we all learned something today. Today we’re going to be talking about some board games. We are going to be talking about Watson & Holmes. We’re going to be talking about escaping from aliens in the poorly-titled -- but great! -- Escape From the Aliens in Outer Space. We’re going to be talking about a card game -- played with a regular 52-card deck -- that doesn't suck called Bourré.

**Matt**: And let’s not Bourré the lede… it’s wild. Absolutely terrifying. And fun.

**Quinns**: Yup! We’re gonna be talking about Gùgōng, a game about being a member of the Chinese government and being corrupt as *hell*! And finally, you two have finally played Chinatown!

## Watson & Holmes [00:03:00]

**Quinns**: Right, let’s start off by talking about three games that are themed, because you two were coming over to my house, along with four other people.

**Matt** [laughing]: You said that like, “You’re coming over to my house.” I’m like, “What? Now?”

**Quinns** [high-pitched]: You’re coming to my house, you want to play a game!

**Matt** [high-pitched]: I don’t know what I’m doing!

**Quinns**: No, this was really weird, because we had exactly seven people.

**Matt**: Mmhm.

**Quinns**: You know, to not toot my own bugle, we play a lot of board games. I host a lot of board game nights. But, with seven players, I was struck by how hard it was to curate games.

**Matt**: You were the master of optimism though. I remember you said, “Oh, there’s seven people coming over.” I was like, “How many games can we play with seven people?” And you were like, “Matt? Loads! [Quinns laughing] We’re gonna play all the seven-player games I’ve been waiting to play.”

**Quinns**: I don’t think I said loads.

**Matt**: You said loads.

**Quinns**: I think I said, “It will be fine,” and it was fine.

**Matt**: Yeah, no, that’s technically true.

**Quinns**: I was really pleased that out of my collection of a couple of hundred games, I was able to manifest a really good seven-player game night. So it started with a game that I know not many people bought called Watson & Holmes.

**Matt**: Mmm, crimebusters of the sea.

**Quinns**: I’m gonna kick this one over to Matt. How would you explain Watson & Holmes?

**Matt**: Watson & Holmes is effectively a lot like a game we know and love called Sherlock Holmes: Consulting Detective. Now Consulting Detective, for those of you who don’t know, is basically a game where you have to move around London, reading a book, looking for clues, and you’ve got to try and solve mysteries collaboratively, to try and solve them as well as Mr. Sherlock Holmes himself. Now it’s a game where you don’t have a board or anything like that, you just have a notepad. You take your own notes, you try and deduce the crime. And the crimes are very complicated, and you basically just sit theorizing amongst each other and going, “Wait wait wait wait wait! I think we should go here and investigate! Let’s talk to the baker, because he knows something about those rolls that he’s not sharing with everyone else.” I mean he’s not sharing information, versus the baker not sharing his rolls with everyone else, because a baker who doesn't share his rolls with people is going to go out of business quite quickly.

**Quinns**: I agree.

**Matt**: Anyway, it’s just like that, however, it’s competitive. Which I think makes it… better? [**Quinns**: [laughs] Well, I mean…] It’s different. But I loved it, I really loved it.

**Quinns**: It was cool. It was both of your first times playing it, right? And that was always a relief, because it’s kind of intimidating to go back to a game that Shut Up & Sit Down has reviewed, that we said was great, and then years later I go back to it going, “I hope it’s… great, because I said it was great.”

**Matt**: Yeah, it is great. It’s slightly more limiting than Consulting Detective. In that, you can basically look up anywhere you want to go in London, and you can be like, “Oh, I’ve got a hunch!” Whereas in this, each case has a bunch of locations and you can choose to go to them, but then there’s a thing of like, only one person can go to each place each turn, and you end bidding, basically, with a resource of carriages, wasn’t it?

**Quinns**: Yeah, it’s an abstracted way of- Everyone can rush around a bit.

**Matt**: It’s how many horses you’re going to burn through to get there the fastest.

**Quinns**: Yeah, you might shoot five horses in the back of the head to get to the crime scene first. [incomprehensible]

**Matt**: Yes. I mean, I’m not sure that’s how horses work, but, I mean… Anyway! You get there, and you’re like, “By jove! I’ve found out this!” But then there’s all sorts of wonderful trickery in the fact that you can then spend a token you might have collected to make the police go there so people can’t go, to try and bluff people into thinking that there might be some really good information there. Or maybe there just *is* some really good information there. But I thought with bigger numbers, it worked way better than Consulting Detective would, because Consulting Detective is fantastic with one or two or maybe three people, but otherwise, everyone’s theorizing so loudly, it just becomes a bit raucous. Whereas in this, you’re trying to crack the crime, but you’re doing it on your own quietly, and then the game is basically trying to decide when you can answer three or four questions about the crime. And when you feel like you’ve got answers for that, you can just scoot off on your… um… I was gonna say chariot -- I’m really getting the theming wrong here -- your horse chariot and try and solve it first and win the game.

**Quinns**: And you did that, which was infuriating.

**Matt**: I did. It was especially hilarious in the fact that you actually had already solved the crime, but then you thought it must be more complicated? And you were looking for clues within clues.

**Quinns**: I’ve had to come to terms with this, you two. As much as I love Consulting Detective and mystery-solving games, I’m just real bad. [Matt laughing] I’m so bad. And I’m okay with that! Because the eternal hubris and optimism that burns within Quintin Smith means that every time I sit down to play them, I think, [low and intense voice] “I’m gonna win this.” And that makes the whole game exciting! I never learn, basically.

**Matt**: Trying to piece together what other information people might have was fascinating, as well. How did you find it, Kylie?

**Kylie**: I mean, I quite liked it. When I was younger I played a lot of Clue or Cluedo. But I always wanted to be actually solving something, rather than being like, “Ah! A spanner!” whenever you found something. So this kind of satisfied that need, and I did like that element of- I was pretty sure that I was onto the right track, and going to the right places, and then everyone kept going to the tea room, and I’m like, “Why are you going to the tea room? It doesn't seem…”

**Quinns**: There was no reason to go to the tea room.

**Kylie**: Yeah, but then the more people that went to the tea room, I was like, “Maybe I have to go to the tea room.”

**Quinns**: There’s a very weird pressure, isn’t there, when everyone has a piece of the puzzle- To clarify, the reason this works so well for big numbers is that play is simultaneous. You all bid as the different locations you’re going to go to. Maybe someone bids outrageously to go to the scene of the crime, et cetera. But then you all just pick up the card you bid for and read it. And that means that the game is super snappy with the maximum of seven people.

**Matt**: Yeah, I liked the fact that you could maybe not go places. Like I didn’t ever go to look at the corpse.

**Quinns**: Which is why I hate you.

**Matt**: Yeah, I didn’t look at the corpse, or the scene of the crime, I don’t think. But I just pieced together, basically by going, “Okay, look, I’m not going to bid for these, and I’m going to do what a Sherlock would do of wandering off into the woods next to it, and piecing together what happened based on tiny bits of strange information because the police won’t let Sherlock look at the crime scene. But it doesn't matter, he doesn't need to!” So yeah, Quinns is just -- for those of you listening at home -- just shaking his head.

**Quinns** [very annoyed]: I’m so annoyed! [Matt laughing] I’m so annoyed! I mean it was the simplest possible crime, and it’s not much of a spoiler to say an unusually-shaped bullet was found in the corpse. And that caused me to basically lose my marbles. I was like, [hard-boiled detective voice] “Well this bullet probably belonged to a gun that was at least 200-years-old. The historical society-”

**Matt**: Also you had some knowledge about corpses which had us double-guessing the game’s logic. But then the game was on the same logical page as everyone else.

**Quinns**: Yes, I knew too much about bodies.

**Matt**: You knew too much about rigor mortis, et cetera.

**Quinns**: I’m interested, because I’m noticing some -- I want to say resentment, that’s not true -- some restraint in Kylie’s praise. What is it that made the game not totally connect for you? Because I think that puts you in the company of most people. I think Shut Up & Sit Down generally likes this game more than the internet, I want to say.

**Kylie**: I mean, I think it worked really well at the higher player count, but I think for me, the thing that I really love about these type of games is the discussion that you have when you’re trying to solve this thing together, and the interesting theories that people can come up with when they read a piece of information is really interesting to me. And you sometimes work things out together, or you might end up actually going on one of the fake trails, you know. But yeah, it’s that discussion that I really quite enjoy, which I was I think I do prefer Consulting Detective, or games along that ilk. But, for a higher player count, I thought this worked a lot better.

**Quinns**: Thanks! I was proud of it. But yeah, it’s the curiest- It’s a very curious social dynamic, where it’s a game where there’s so much to talk about, and you would all benefit so much if you talked, [lowered voice] and no one says anything.

**Matt**: Yeah, because you can, can’t you? You can share some stuff.

**Quinns**: I mean the manual doesn't say you can’t.

**Matt**: But no one wants to.

**Quinns**: Yeah.

**Matt**: I definitely agree, but I thought for a seven-player thing, it was a remarkable little… Because it was the first of a few games we played that evening, and it was a great way to start the party. And I really enjoyed the fake threads, I really enjoyed having to double-guess the… Kind of staying your course, of watching everyone else rushing off to the tea rooms, or watching everyone else going to this place or that place, and getting to the point where you’ve got enough of the raw clues to be like, “Oh, okay. I can understand why they went there now.” But then trying to decide, “Is everyone right? Should I be following their route, or is that a red herring?” I found that to be a fascinating dynamic of watching everyone else doing stuff, but then having to really drill down with the information you have and being like, “What’s important?”

**Quinns**: Speaking of which, we should mention the best mechanic in it, which is: Exactly like Clue, or Cluedo if you’re English, if you go to the end, you provide your answers, and if you got any wrong, you are instantly eliminated. But! Someone getting that wrong opens up a new space for players to visit, so that you can spend the turn reading someone else’s answers.

**Matt**: And finding out how many of them were right, but not which ones. Which is really cool. And I love the fact that there’s some little flavor with different characters. And when we played, Chris Bratt’s character had a one-time ability where it meant for the whole round, no one was allowed to take notes. [laughing]

**Quinns** [major frustration]: It was the worst!

**Matt**: Because it means that you then flip up this location, and I think mine was fine, it was like, “Okay, there’s not-”

**Quinns** [frustration]: Mine was a list of eight double-barrel names! [laughing]

**Matt**: Yeah, you were just like, “This is awful!” [Quinns laughing] I thought it was really interesting. In a way, I can see why, if people did like Consulting Detective and then got that and played it with two or three people, you’d be like, “No, I want to work together.”

**Quinns**: Oh yeah.

**Matt**: But as a big table party game, something a bit more akin to a murder mystery, I thought it was a really really fun thing.

**Quinns**: Yeah, lovely thing to share, but yeah, certainly stronger at higher player counts.

## Escape from the Aliens in Outer Space [00:12:14]

**Quinns**: Speaking of which, something that I thought, at the beginning of the game- We played an amazing game of this, and I thought it was disastrous, and then it turned out that everyone around the table was actually having the best time? We played Escape from the Aliens in Outer Space. Now this is a very interesting one. This is a hidden movement game with hidden roles. It’s set on a spaceship where everything’s gone wrong. We talked about it and reviewed it *way* back in the site’s history. The way it works is everyone is dealt a card at the start of the game saying either they’re a human, trying to get off a ship, or they’re an alien, and they’re trying to eat the humans. And everyone on their turn will move to a different hexagon, and potentially make noise. Or -- and this is the rule that powers the game -- you might draw a card that means you have to announce to everybody, “Oh, you hear a noise from hexagon B5,” but actually, that card, when you drew it, said, “You can lie about this.” So sometimes players move silently, sometimes they make noise, sometimes they make noise happen on the other side of the ship. And so it’s basically a game of cat and mouse, BUT -- and this turned out to be really important in a seven-player game -- no one knew what team anyone was on.

**Matt**: Mmmm, and we thought we did! But we were wrong.

**Quinns**: Well this is why it was amazing, because about ten minutes into our -- I want to say -- forty-minute game -- and this was just an unbelievable game with so many twists -- we thought we knew what team everyone was on. It was like, “Oh, the aliens are these three people, the humans are these four people.”

**Matt**: It seemed pretty obvious, really. It seemed pretty obvious. “You’re an alien-”

**Quinns** [manic]: Shall we start, Kylie, with the fact that I spent [Matt and Kylie laughing] half of my game… Kylie, Kylie, Kylie look at me when I’m talking to you! I spent half the game stalking you, because you were pretending to be a human, *but you weren’t human were you*. Me, the alien, was actually stalking another alien across the ship.

**Matt**: And you could have killed each other by accident!

**Quinns**: Yeah, I absolutely could have. And it didn’t happen.

**Kylie**: Yeah no, that was pretty epic. I pretty enjoyed that. Because I was stalking Clark, and I was pretty sure that I was on the same space as him, and then I thought you were hunting for Matt, so I was like, “No one cares what I am. I can just silently stalk through here, people thinking I’m a human.” And then all of a sudden it turned out Clark was nowhere near where I was. You were stalking Clark as well, which meant you were hot on my trail, but by that point I felt like I couldn’t announce that I was an alien without giving away my game play?

**Matt**: Yeah, Clark had played an absolute blinder in the fact that he just kept getting cards that allowed him to lie about where he was, so he just made it look like he was very slowly clomping down the corridor to the south, and then suddenly was like, “Oh, I’m up here. I’m in the north. I’m about to get into an escape pod.” And it’s like, what?!

**Quinns**: That happened *twice*!

**Matt**: Yeah.

**Quinns**: It was nuts! What was it that happened with… Oh yeah.

**Matt**: Well with Clark, he just unfortunately drew one of the-

**Quinns**: No I was remembering what happened with Chris Bratt.

**Matt**: With Chris Bratt- Well, I was incredibly lucky, because whilst Clark had a blinder and managed to get to an escape pod without anyone knowing *anything* about where he was -- everyone thought they knew exactly where he was, but they were all wrong -- and then he just got a dud pod, the one out of five pods which is dud, so it’s like, press the button, it’s like “[buzzer sound], you’re not getting out of here alive,” somebody else got to the door of one and then Annie, the alien, just leapt on them in exactly the right position.

**Quinns**: That was Rob! Kylie, do you want to explain your partner’s hubris.

**Kylie**: So, I think he kept getting the cards that were silent, so he wasn’t making any noise whatsoever, but for some reason, Annie had honed in on where he’d gone, and she was making a lot of noise in that sector.

**Quinns**: It was nuts to the rest of us, because she was working on a hunch, and she was essentially banging against the sides of the ship, every step, wearing metal-toed boots. None of us knew why she was hanging out, and then yeah, like you were saying-

**Kylie**: Yeah, I think we all were going, “Annie, why are you there? No one is there. What are you doing?”

**Matt**: Yeah, it seemed like she’d lost the plot, but then she just snacked on a man about to enter an escape pod. Meanwhile, I was just walking to try and get the escape pod on my own. So I was walking off on my own and I was having a very bad run of luck, in the fact that I had to move through three clanky sectors in a row in order to get to a point where I might be able to get to a pod safely. And all I needed to do was draw maybe one card that let me lie about where I was throughout that three spaces. And I didn’t. I just kept drawing, again and again and again, kept drawing the cards that tell everyone exactly where you are. And then I was like, “Well, everyone knows I’m down here now, so actually maybe I’ll double back a bit to confuse them? And all I need to do, again, is just draw one thing that’s a lie, and I can lose the scent.” But then I just kept drawing noise ones. So everyone else around the table was just utterly confused, because basically, whilst everyone else was sneaking around trying to avoid the aliens, I was just clomping around in circles, [Quinns laughing] literally being like, [naively upbeat] “I’m over here!”

**Quinns**: You were too afraid of aliens to-

**Matt**: I was so afraid, so I was trying to run circles around them, but I ended up just basically being like a panicked Dennis Nedry in Jurassic Park, [Quinns laughing] just running into the mud and screaming. But Chris Bratt was an alien on my tail, and I was trying to dodge him for ages, to the point where you were chasing me for a while but you gave up because Chris was going to eat me. But then Chris didn’t eat me. And then it turned out that that’s because-

**Quinns**: Chris was a human.

**Matt**: -Chris Bratt was a human pretending to be an alien.

**Quinns**: It was *so* interesting. I’ve actually never quite played a match of a hidden role game like it, where you know everyone’s roles, and everyone starts talking- I was saying to Chris, “Okay, Chris, listen, I can go over here if you eat Matt,” and Chris was like, “Yeah yeah yeah, sure.” And then it just turned out he wasn’t even an alien, but was keeping up kayfabe for the whole game.

**Matt**: Yeah!

**Quinns**: Usually hidden role games have a moment where it’s kind of revealed and you kind of know what role everyone is.

**Matt**: Yeah, exactly.

**Quinns**: I’ve not played a game where that happens and it turns out, actually, everyone was lying.

**Matt**: I was running in circles for ages trying to evade the jaws of an alien that wasn’t there! [Quinns laughing] Because A) he wasn’t an alien, and B) he was on the other side of the map!

**Kylie**: No yeah, I was just gonna say, yeah, no one was interested in Matt whatsoever. [laughing]

**Matt**: Well Quinns would’ve eaten me if he’d known that no one was going to eat me, because I was a pretty easy snack. I was like a Dairylea Lunchable just hovering around. I was very easy to eat.

**Quinns**: [contented sigh] It was just wild. I mean, we probably don’t need to talk about the game more than that. If you google “Shut Up & Sit Down Escape from the Aliens in Outer Space,” you’ll find our written review.

**Matt**: I think it was something you reviewed just before I joined the team.

**Quinns**: Very early, yeah.

**Matt**: My final thing I love about it is it comes with a book of maps, basically, that are then wipe-clean marker books.

**Quinns**: Yeah, this is the deluxe edition that we have.

**Matt**: Oh, okay, well yeah, it’s great. But I love the fact on the front that you’ve got a little picture of a man, and you can make him look like he’s skateboarding or holding flowers or putting on a show. Just a little fun thing to do while you’re waiting for your turn!

**Quinns**: By doodling on the wipe-clean player aids.

**Matt**: Doodle on the wipe-clean front thing! Make your own little drawing. Fantastic.

**Kylie**: I mean, I really loved that slow build up of tension for the game. But I am a bit concerned that we’re never gonna have as epic a game as what we did.

**Quinns**: Yeah, but that kind of almost has its own value? I have a couple of games in my board game collection, and this is completely irrational, but where they’re not great games, but I had a really great game *of* them. Matt’s about to- Oh it’ll probably be out by the time this podcast comes out, but we just put up a video on Youtube of Matt filming me talking about my board game collection.

**Matt**: Yeah.

**Quinns**: There’s a couple of games in there which I only keep around because they’re just happy memories. I probably will never play them again, but as a totemic object, I can now look at those boxes and be like, “Ahhh, remember the time.” It’s almost like having a photo of a holiday or something. So maybe, yeah, we’ll never have a game as epic of Escape from the Aliens in Outer Space, but, maybe that’s okay?

**Matt**: I think there’s a lot in there though, especially in the fact that it’s not as simple as, “You’re a goodie or you’re an alien.” There is such a wealth of different things that the aliens could be, or different things that humans could be, that definitely, right from the start, it’s ripe for people being confused about that stuff. And all you need to do is roll with it very slightly, and you can be a fake alien or a fake person.

[funky sting]

## Bourré [00:19:55]

**Quinns**: Quickly then, we’ll talk about- Because after that, we rounded off the evening, because I was googling “what card games can I play for seven players,” and I dug up an unusual one called Bourré, which is French. I’m going to stop saying it in a French accent.

**Matt**: French… for butter!

**Quinns** [major frustration]: It’s not!

**Matt** [laughing]: I know.

**Quinns**: This is spelled B-O-U-R-R-E with an accent on.

**Matt**: And I think it’s very brave of you to try and say it.

**Quinns**: I’ve been listening to too much So Very Wrong About Games, which has a guy who was raised in Montreal, so he’s able to pronounce everything in a flawless French accent and *I hate it*. [Matt laughing] But only because he’s better at it than me. So yeah, Bourré’s an interesting one. Apparently quite big in the NBA, of all places? It’s also quite big in New Orleans.

**Matt**: I can see why it’d be big in the NBA, because it is baller [Quinns laughing] as hell.

**Quinns**: It’s unusual. So what you have here is a trick-taking game, which I’m not going to try and explain on the podcast. Basically, there are some similarities with poker. You all ante to receive your cards, so you have a pot of chips in the middle, and then whoever wins is going to take those chips away. Players receive their cards and decide whether they are going to play. Let’s say it’s Matt first. Matt says, “Mmm, I quite like my cards. I’ll play.” And I go, “Yeah, I’ll play.” Kylie sees that Matt and I are playing and a couple of other people are playing and is like, “No, I’m out. Done.” Here’s the catch in Bourré: You have to win more tricks than anybody else in order to take the pot. However, if no one wins more tricks than anyone else -- so if two people both win two tricks -- the pot just rolls over to next round.

**Matt**: Mmhm.

**Quinns**: Which is uniquely infuriating because you came so close and got nothing!

**Matt**: But Quinns it’s fine, because you just put in maybe one chip to get some cards and then another chip just to stay in the round.

**Quinns**: Well Matt, it’s funny you say that, because- And this is the twist that means that it’s completely unlike poker and it’s so easy to get people excited about, which is: If you say you’re gonna win the most tricks, and actually win zero, which is extremely likely in a trick-taking game, once that pot is given to someone, you have to put an amount of chips into the pot that is equal to how much was in it. So let’s say there’s ten dollars worth of chips in the pot. Someone wins, they get ten dollars, but if you win zero tricks, you then have to put *ten dollars* into the pot. So it’s got incentive for coming first and an equally large penalty for coming last.

**Matt**: Yeah, or not even coming last! You can have multiple players who then do not…

**Quinns**: Yeah, at which point-

**Matt**: At which point then you’ve got a pot of like forty chips, and then next round- And this is why often there’ll be a limit [Quinns laughing] for how many you’ll have to put in at any one point, because otherwise… And this is why, again, I’m not surprised it’s popular in the NBA, because if you’re people who have, you know, more money than god, [Quinns laughing] then it would just be an insane game, where it’d just be like, “Oh, I guess I lost that hand. How much do I need to put in? 400,000 pounds. [Quinns laughing] Oh okay, fine.” Honestly, it’s terrifying, and over the past few months with us doing this Card Games That Don’t Suck Youtube series, we have been dabbling lots more into some super-mild gambling. And we should point out that it’s obviously gambling. If you are an adult with friends using small amounts of money, and no one’s getting too serious, great. If you’re not, or if you’re not so good at when you lose, not a good idea, and this game, *a terrible idea*.

**Quinns**: Oh my gosh, I’ve never played…

**Matt**: It’s the swingiest thing I’ve ever seen. It’s terrifying, because the excitement of- You know, when you’re playing poker and you think, “Oh, I might win this pot! This pot is like three pounds, I might win all of it!” When you’re doing the complete opposite, when you’re not being like, “Mm, how likely is it I’m gonna win three pounds with this,” you’re looking at it being like, “How likely is it that I can win *one trick*?” Because as long as you win one trick-

**Quinns**: Out of five, yeah.

**Matt**: -out of five, then you’re fine. But we were playing with seven people, so when you had five people in, suddenly it’s like, [apprehensive] “Ahhhh!” So you had to be sure, really, that you could win one, and maybe you win three, and then you get the pot! But you just had to be sure that you could win one! And when you were sure you could win one and you didn’t, it’s suddenly like, “That’s fine, now I just have to put in… OH NO!!” [Quinns laughing] People had huge stacks of chips which would then go straight back into the middle of the table.

**Kylie**: Yeah, no, I think that was a point- Because I thought it was really hard when you were the first one to say whether you were going to be in or not-

**Matt and Quinns**: Yeah!

**Kylie**: -because you didn’t know how many other people were going to say yes, and I think one round when I actually decided, “You know what? I’m gonna go in on this!” I was the first one to say yeah, and then *everyone* said yes and I was like, “Oh god.”

**Quinns**: Yeah, the dealer rotates around the table with each hand, as well, so if you’re the last person to say- Because then if no one’s gone in, you can go in and try and clean up, or if everyone said they’re in you’re safe. But I ended up playing badly because I was like, “Well, it’ll take probably another half an hour for the dealer thing to come around for me, for my situation to be that good again, so I should go in because it’ll never be as safe as it is right now-” and then suddenly I’ve lost everything.

**Matt**: Yeah, I think it’s interesting. I mean, it’s incredibly dangerous- [laughing]

**Quinns**: It’s wild!

**Matt**: -and should only be played with very small amounts of money, and severe caps on how much can you potentially have to put in as top-ups, because otherwise it can become insane. But I think what I really loved about it is, most of the time with things like this, you get the excitement of winning, and the disappointment of losing. With this, basically, winning was great, but it wasn’t much more great than just winning one hand and knowing that you weren’t then going to have to put in twenty chips into the middle. So it meant that you got that way more often. Way more often, you were like, [tense] “Euurrghh!” And then you get the feeling of having won, even though you hadn’t? And lots of people would get it?

**Quinns**: Oh yeah, because you avoided getting penalized.

**Matt**: Because you avoided losing an incredible amount of money.

**Quinns**: Yeah, it’s an interesting one, I guess. I think that’s why we found it so immediately entertaining. It’s like, yeah, it’s the thrill of winning and then the thrill of not losing.

**Matt**: It was so intense to look at these cards and be like, “Oh yeah, maybe I could win! Maybe I could win the pot with this!” Or maybe you could lose like four pounds at once, which with the denominations we were using was an incredible amount.

**Quinns**: Yeah, it was nuts. It was also bizarre to win a couple of hands and be like, “Ah, I must be doing really well.” But then somehow, you’re losing money because the hands where you crash out and have to pay into the pot just happen to be bigger pots than the pots that you won.

**Matt**: Yeah. Yup. Yup.

**Kylie**: That was my issue. It was a pretty big pot when I lost, and I was like, “I was doing pretty well up until this point, and now, oh, I’m losing pretty badly.”

**Quinns**: It’s ridiculous!

**Matt**: Or the worst thing where you almost win a pot, but you get the same amount as someone else, which means the pot stays in the middle and then gets added to, but then you feel like, “Well, I should go in on the next round, because I kind of almost won that!” [Quinns laughing] And then it’s like, “Oh you lost that one,” and it’s like, [incredulous] “What???” [laughing]

**Quinns**: The actual high point for me was not winning a hand, but watching Matt and Rob, having both thought they won, neither of them had won because they won the same number of tricks, [**Matt** [major frustration]: Gaaahhhh!] and then the only bonus you get for that is you don’t have to ante next round?

**Matt**: Yeah, so it’s just like a free chip.

**Quinns**: Yeah, you won five pence.

**Matt**: It’s properly like, [shitty casino worker] “Here, please enjoy this casino keyring.”

**Quinns**: But then also, it incentivizes you- And again, this is why it’s such a dangerous gambling game, and so funny if you’re playing with really small denominations, because when that happens, obviously you’ve got a huge pot next round, so everyone wants to win it, which means everyone goes in, which means the probability of winning zero tricks and getting whopped on the wrist is way higher.

**Matt**: Yeah, it’s terrifying. Honestly, it’s one of the few card games I’ve played that’s involved gambling which I just feel like needs a tremendous warning sticker on it. Because it’s so easy to just lose all of your money immediately. It’s like, if you’re not 100% cool with that… You know, we say with gambling, “Don’t gamble what you’re not willing to lose,” but it’s like, you can lose your entire ante, you can lose a whole evening of things, of being like, “I’m going to put three pounds in for these chips.” You could lose all of that in like twenty minutes, [Quinns laughing] easily. It could just go in your first round. So if you’re not completely comfortable with that, then just stay the hell away from it. Gosh, what a strange and exciting game.

**Quinns**: What a bizarre thing, and we’re gonna absolutely do it for the series. So yeah, look out for some more coverage of Bourré in the near future.

[funky sting]

## Gùgōng [00:27:34]

**Quinns**: Kylie and I now have been playing some Gùgōng. So Gùgōng is a game set in China in history times. Now, Matthew, stop me if you’ve heard this one before, but you’re going to be working for the government, trying to do various government administrative tasks.

**Matt**: I love the government.

**Quinns**: Well, in this, you’d better love the government, because the person who gets the most points wins! And you’re going to get points from doing things like constructing the Great Wall of China, implementing laws, sailing boats down a river… It’s all generic German management game stuff.

**Matt**: So where do the dugongs from Legend of Zelda come into this?

**Quinns**: Right, first off, dudo- dugongs? Oh, you’ve thrown me! It’s a real animal, it’s not just from the Legend of Zelda.

**Matt** [just so confused]: Wha?

**Quinns**: It’s a sea cow that’s native to- It’s in the Middle East and places.

**Matt**: Oh, but I thought you fed them bombs and they blew up and there was King… no that’s dodongos! Hang on, I’ve got to go back to my lab and make some notes. [Kylie laughing]

**Quinns**: You have to go back to your diaries?

**Matt**: I’m really sorry.

**Quinns**: So here’s the thing about Gùgōng, though, Matthew, which is, the Chinese emperor is sick of corruption. He’s had enough! There’s no corruption gonna be allowed in this Chinese government.

**Matt**: There’s one thing we know that the Chinese government don’t like, it’s corruption.

**Quinns**: It’s true! So what you have instead is this system that powers the game, which is the idea of exchanging gifts. It’s like, [slimy government official voice] “Oh, Kylie, I’m not gonna give you a bribe, but if you wanted to give me that jade statue on your desk, I would give you these chopsticks.” And then Kylie has bribed me. So the way that this works is it’s a management game with seven different action spaces you might take. You might go to the Great Wall, you might go to increase intrigue by hanging out with the concubines.

**Matt**: Mmm!

**Quinns**: All these different spaces that are basically little minigames, all of which give you points in different ways. However! Every space on the board has a card on it, which is what that government official has right now, in terms of gifts. And these cards all have numbers from one to nine. So one, bowl of fruit, that’s garbage. Nine, golden statue, that’s really expensive! Players then have a hand of four cards, and to take any of the actions, you have to put a card on that space and exchange it with what the government official has.

**Matt**: Ostensibly, I don’t think somebody giving you a bowl of fruit is a bribe.

**Quinns**: No, it’s not, it’s a bribe if I give you something worth- Like a pair of engraved chopsticks, and you give me a bowl of fruit back.

**Matt**: Oh, right, I see.

**Quinns** [slimy government official voice]: See how this works?

**Matt**: I completely see.

**Kylie**: Although actually, the bowl of fruit, even though it’s one point, you can swap that with the golden lion statue, because sometimes the government official will do anything for a banana.

**Quinns**: It’s true, they get super hungry, and then it’s a way to reset the board.

**Matt**: Blood sugar, it’s a thing.

**Quinns**: Turns out, running the biggest country in the world is thirsty slash hungry work. But mechanically, this works beautifully, right? So let’s say you’ve got a seven in your hand, and you really want to take an action on this space that has the four gift printed on it, okay?

**Matt**: Mmhm?

**Quinns**: Matt’s closing his eyes, he’s scrunching his face up so hard to try and picture this.

**Matt**: I think I got it.

**Quinns**: Okay, so that means that you could take the action on that four space -- let’s say it’s the sailing boats space -- you could go and sail a boat and exchange that seven in your hand and pick up the four, okay?

**Matt**: Yeah, but that sounds like a bad deal.

**Quinns**: It’s not great, because that four that you’ve got now goes into your hand for next turn.

**Matt**: So then you have to find somebody who’s got…

**Quinns**: Something that’s like a one, two, or a three?

**Matt** [talking over Quinns]: Something that’s better than...

**Matt**: Yeah.

**Quinns**: Yup. So this is the whole game. Everyone starts with a hand of pretty decent gifts, but over the course of the game, you’re going to be exchanging them for worse things and worse things and worse things and worse things and worse things.

**Matt**: Question. And I’ll go with Kylie for this one. What’s worse? Corruption, or… giving gifts to people that are gifts that have already been given to you?

**Quinns**: Oh, regifting.

**Matt**: Regifting.

**Kylie**: Ohhhh. Well, I guess in today’s world of sustainability, you know actually, I think corruption.

**Matt**: Yeah, I think you’re probably right. I think regifting is pretty good. However, regifting fruit. [Quinns laughing] What’s the line on that one?

**Kylie**: Yeah, yeah. Although, I think there’s one thing you haven’t mentioned, which is the destiny dice.

**Quinns**: Oh god!

**Kylie**: So actually, you roll some dice at the beginning of the round, and you want to get the most amount of cards that are represented in those numbers?

**Matt**: Mmhm?

**Kylie**: So actually, sometimes you really want that two, because that two is in the destiny dice, which gives you extra things at the end of the game.

**Quinns**: Yup, I definitely [**Matt**: Oh!] screwed myself over, because we roll the dice at the start of a round, and it’s like, “Oh, anyone who’s holding gifts number two, four, or five next round, you know, gets extra servants…”

**Matt**: Is this to do with the idea of it being like, “This is lucky”?

**Quinns**: I think if you were being generous, yes. I want to say that in an otherwise quite thematic game, that’s the one area where he’s like, [monotone] “And then also there’s some dice with numbers on.”

**Matt**: Yeah, because that doesn't change. There are things that are lucky within Chinese culture, [**Quinns**: Yeah, like the number seven.] but they’re not different every season.

**Quinns**: For sure, yeah.

**Matt**: Like, “Our suitcases are so lucky this year! I can’t believe you got eighteen suitcases. Wow. Have a house!”

**Quinns**: So long as we’re talking about theme though, it is actually a really lovely-looking game. Really lovely components. You’ve got a lovely little wooden Chinese person who goes around collecting taxes, and he’s cute and made of wood, and it’s nice. But no! I’ve been thinking about this game a lot since we played it, and it’s just a really strong puzzle to have this smaller mechanic that’s almost like a flywheel that then sits on top of the game. So you can’t interact with what is otherwise a quite simple and satisfying management game without doing this little card game first? And it’s very simple to play numbers that are simply just higher than the ones on the board, but what I really enjoyed was getting to the final round -- round four of four of Gùgōng -- and then my cards were just garbage! So at that really important point in a management game where you’re like, “Well I definitely need to finish. I need to get this last piece of jade that will make all the jade-collecting I’ve been doing this game worthwhile. I need to finish the Great Wall, I need to go and meet the emperor” -- all these different tracks -- you’ve got the worst cards if you’re not careful.

**Matt**: Mmmm.

**Quinns**: So actually it’s worth being less ambitious in early game to insure that in the last round you have good cards. Also, and this is great: Let’s say someone has a really low card, like that pair of chopsticks I mentioned, it’s like number two. Obviously, it’s efficient for you to place a three, and then you’re only swapping a three for a two, so you’re in the clear, right? But what you could also do is put an eight there, which is a terrible gift exchange. Give the person there something *super* valuable. But! No one else can then use that space!

**Matt** [light dawns over Marblehead]: Yeah! Mmm!

**Quinns**: Mmm!

**Kylie**: Mmm!

**Matt**: Because everyone’s like, “I’ve brought you a gi- What’s that on your desk! [quietly shocked] Oh my god. [Quinns laughing] I just brought you eight bananas! I can’t compete with a jade whatever-that-is!”

**Quinns**: Although interestingly you can only give them the fruit item if they’re hungry enough. So the fruit is not wild, the fruit can only be exchanged for the nine, the highest card.

**Matt**: Wow. Well today I’ve learnt that accepting gifts is technically corruption, which means I’ve got to go and deal with a cupboard full of, uh… full of gold.

**Quinns**: Oh, you’re like Alan Partridge who receives pallets of mouthwash.

**Matt**: Yeah, pallets of gold from Matagot. [laughing]

**Quinns**: Kylie, I enjoyed this one quite a bit. How did you feel about it?

**Kylie**: No, it was a really charming little game. It is a really beautiful game. I really enjoyed the colors in this game.

**Quinns**: You did, we were talking about this! Because it’s not yellow, it’s a sort of… I don’t know the word.

**Matt**: Green?

[Quinns laughing]

**Kylie**: No, but there’s a really nice teal color as well, which I really rated that.

**Quinns**: Yeah, I don’t even know what the yellow- The yellow was just slightly burnished, slightly brown.

**Matt**: Oh, is it perhaps a burnt…

**Matt and Quinns**: Umber.

**Quinns**: Maybe, maybe.

**Matt**: Mmm, that’s umber.

**Quinns**: It was definitely the kind of game that makes you realize how-

**Matt**: Or ochre, ochre is that one.

**Quinns**: Okay.

**Matt**: Burnt ochre.

**Quinns**: It was the kind of game that makes you realize how unimaginative certain companies are being when the colors are: Red! Green! Blue! Unpainted wood! This was very much like, just by changing all the colors a little bit, they were really nice.

**Kylie**: Yeah, really pleasing. But I think one thing, did you mention the mechanic about the imperial palace? So you can only actually win if you get to have your meeting with the emperor. So you’ve got this little man that you’ve got to waddle up this little track.

**Quinns**: It’s a *huge* track!

**Kylie**: Yeah. And that was the really interesting thing, was when you were talking about exchanging those cards, like a three for an eight, because you almost prevented Rob from getting his meeting with the emperor, which would mean that he couldn’t win-

**Quinns**: Yes.

**Kylie**: -in the last game. So it’s easy to forget about that little track, but it’s actually arguably the most important because if you don’t get there, you can’t win anyway.

**Quinns**: I really enjoyed that, honestly. Because usually, you know, these management games, otherwise known as eurogames, it’s almost always a point attack. It’s whoever gets the most points. And that’s not enormously exciting. Usually at the end of a eurogame, it’s like, “Oh, if I do this, then maybe, just maybe! I’ll get two extra points!”

**Matt**: Well, we’re usually like, “Choose one of these many mad tracks and just really hammer down one of them, and then see how many points you get.” Whereas, having a thing that’s like, “Yeah but you’ve got to do that” is quite cool. It reminds me a little bit of Heaven & Ale.

**Quinns**: Oh, yes.

**Matt**: I’m gonna say that again because I mlu-murmured it. Heaven & Ale, which we talked about on a podcast before, and I’m really hoping gets a reprint with some art that isn’t awful, because that’s a really enticing game about monks getting drunk-

**Quinns**: It’s a lovely game.

**Matt**: -on their own supplies. And again, it has the thing of like, “Well done, yeah you did a really good job of making tons of hops, but you didn’t get any water, which means, at the end of the game, you didn’t make any beer.” Just literally, it’s that thing of being like, yeah, you can try and do one thing really well, but if you don’t do everything a bit well? Then you can’t make beer.

**Kylie**: Yeah, I think I find that really interesting for how your strategy goes going into the game, because with Gùgōng… Some eurogames that I’ve played, after I’ve played once, I’m like, “Right, okay, I need to go down this track to win each time.” Especially with, actually, Great Western Trail, you know, trains. It’s all about those trains for me.

**Quinns**: Oh, you love the trains.

**Kylie**: Yeah, I love the trains, and I win quite a lot with the trains, so it’s a good track. But yeah, with Gùgōng, after one play I’m not actually sure whether I know which one is the right one to go for, or which lead.

**Quinns**: It’s pretty wild, yeah.

**Matt**: It’s all about the talk-to-the-emperor strat, I think. As far as I’m concerned.

**Quinns**: I’m kind of stuck on it, just because it’s so nice to have a game which is like carrot and stick. It’s kind of like Bourré, which we were just talking about, you know? It’s fun to be rewarded, but it’s also fun to be terrified of something. And it was interesting in Gùgōng to spend like, what, an hour and a half, really fretting over points, but then be like, “Hang on, this could all be quite literally pointless if I don’t meet the emperor.”

**Matt**: Is there some similarities here to a game we talked about a couple of podcasts ago: Tramways, that we investigated. Of being like, just having this mad, slightly harsh system where you just… Does it have the same enticement? That’s not a word, I don’t think. Is enticement a word? I think it might be, actually.

**Kylie**: I’m gonna say yes.

**Quinns**: Okay, well it was enticing, it was good, and oh, in fact, I’ve just realized, we’re recording this podc- Depending on when this podcast comes out, there might even be a video review of Gùgōng on Shut Up & Sit Down. Imagine that.

**Matt**: Well I never. Well I look forward to, maybe, I don’t know, maybe being in that review [Quinns and Kylie laughing], we haven’t done that yet. I think we’re filming it next week, yeah. I mean, I will play it first, obviously.

**Quinns**: Yeah, I wouldn’t stress too much.

## Chinatown [00:38:30]

[chime]

**Quinns**: Hallo there! This is Quinns from the future. I’m now editing this podcast and I’ve realized, oh no! You idiot guys and girl, you forgot to talk about Chinatown, the amazing negotiation board game, even though you said you would. So I thought, hey, why not come back to save the past like Marty McFly, and I think I’ll just talk for five minutes about Chinatown again, because it’s just been reprinted.

This is a game that we reviewed all the way back in 2014, those lusty days when my hair was still so thick that I didn’t get sunburned through it. But then this game was immediately sold out, and finally Z-Man have reprinted it, and so a lot of people are wondering: Is it still good? Does Shut Up & Sit Down still recommend it? To which the answer is yes, and yes, and then a third yes just for good measure.

So if you’ve not heard of this game before, it’s a negotiation classic, and it’s excellently simple. You’ve got eight city blocks in New York’s Chinatown in the 1960s, and players randomly get given lots around this. So you might get the shop over here and the property over here and the property over here. Players then also randomly get given tiles, of which you draw randomly, and there’s only a limited amount of each. So maybe you get two dim sum tiles and a tea shop tile. Your friend gets another tea shop tile and then three seafood tiles.

And then what players do is they enter a negotiation phase where anything goes, and players end up swapping and buying and trading and promising lots, money, and these property tiles you get, with the goal of every player creating a linked run of properties -- so like 64, 65, and then 67, which is just below them -- and then you place businesses on those, trying to complete them. So for example, a tea shop tile has the number 4 printed on it, which means you need four tea shop tiles in adjacent businesses to complete that business, and then those businesses start making a *ton* of cash, because incomplete businesses don’t make very much money. So it’s six rounds of trading and income, trading and income, trading and income, and after you’ve done that six times, the game is over!

And my gosh! It’s great! I did our review a while back, so it’s kind of a shame that I’m talking about it, because it was Matt and Kylie who played it for the first time, but I know exactly what they think because I talked to them a lot afterwards. They both just really, really like it. We played Chinatown as a three-player game recently, at which point it’s a tight and interesting and curious little negotiation strategy game. But then Matt and I later played it with a full five, which is just a riot! Because there’s this sense that if you don’t make the deals you want *right now*, the tiles and spaces will be traded away, people will run out of money, they’ll lose interest, they’ll get tired, so everyone’s [starts snapping fingers] trying to make deals really quickly. I wish I could [makes sad wimpy left-handed finger clicks] click my finger with my left hand so that I could be like [clicks alternating fingers along with words] pow pow pow pow! But I can’t do that.

And that time tension -- which is not a real term but I’m going to pretend that it is -- was something that we also saw in another negotiation game: Sidereal Confluence. The idea in that game, where if you don’t make the deals you need quick, then all the cubes that you need will be snaffled up by other players, and it’s entertaining there, and it’s entertaining here.

Chinatown also distinguishes itself by being a very calculating game, where you are playing with hard numbers and figures. You know that if you manage to get that fifth takeout tile, it will be worth sixty grand to you, multiplied by the four remaining turns in the game, so 60 times 4, 240,000 dollars. Wow! So you can put prices on things, but despite that, it’s a game where players get hot-headed, and players are overly mean to each other. It’s possible to make these lovely mistakes, or grudges.

We played with a man called Asger, actually, the designer of Flamme Rouge, and Chinatown’s one of his favorite games ever. And there was this amazing turn where, Matt and I were trying to negotiate for this additional property that would let us finish our photography shop, and the player who owned the property was being… You know, he knew it was valued at 60,000, he was trying to get 60,000 out of us, and Matt and I were just saying, “No.” And then Asger swept into him and said, “You know what, I’ll pay you 60,000 for it.” And then bought it! So now suddenly we were negotiating with Asger, and he did that because he felt that we would eventually cave. We would eventually pay 60,000 or even 70,000 for it, because we wanted it so much. So *he* bought it. So he took over negotiations, and we just said, “No. We were playing hardball with him, we’re serious, we’re going to play hardball with you even more. Especially so, because we think you’re doing really well in the game.”

And so we never bought that lot from him. So in a way, he ended up losing a fair chunk of money, and in that game, Matt and I beat him by only the smallest possible amount, just 10,000 dollars! So if he’d managed to keep his cool, which he did for the entire game… But in that one moment where he lost it and just thought, “Ah, this’ll be fun, this’ll be wild. I’ll really screw them.” He lost the game in that moment.

So yeah, absolutely lovely. A deeply emotional and colorful experience that’s nonetheless very strategic and thought-provoking. And most of all, it’s simple. The manual is just four pages long, and of course that’s why it’s been reprinted over and over again. It’s not just a lovely 9 or 10 out of 10 game -- if you’re into negotiation -- it’s just *beautifully* simple.

And ugh! The color you get from negotiating over properties that everyone’s been to, you know? You’re not negotiating over like, factories, or tex- Well, you *are* negotiating over factories. That’s a poor example. But you’re not talking about textile industries in the 1780s, you’re talking about places that the players have been in real life. Seafood restaurants, laundromats, Chinese takeout places. It doesn't make the game entertaining because it’s exotic, it just makes it relatable. And it’s funny, as well. When your friend is giving you a hard time, trying to sell you their shrimp tiles as if they were the shrimp mafia, that’s just hilarious, and really softens the game, you know? “I’m the laundromat king!” you’ll say, and players will be like, “Oh god, he *is* the laundromat king. That’s pretty worrying.” There’s real relatable color there.

Oh! And if you want to watch us playing Chinatown, we’ve just recorded a full playthrough video, which is currently on our Twitch channel at twitch.tv/shutupandsitdown. [computer keys clacking] Let’s check if I got that right. Yeah, I did. So it’ll be there for the next few weeks. After that, it’ll be uploaded to our Youtube channel. If you just search for “Shut Up & Sit Down play Chinatown” on Youtube, you’ll definitely find that in future.

Okay, like Marty McFly in the past, it’s time for me to now go back… to the future! And let Matt and Kylie finish out the podcast. Take it away, Quinns!

## Mailbag [00:45:23]

*Mailbag jingle: Ohhh, put your hand in my mailbag. Find me a letter!*

[rustling sounds]

**Matt** [straining under exertion of getting a letter out of the mailbag]: Eeeeaaaaaauuuhhhhh! I… just have a little… I think I’ve got a good one here… let me just squeeze past this, and that, and right down… oh! Oh! It’s a little one. Got one.

**Quinns**: Tiny letter, and it’s from Patrick! Thank you, Patrick. Patrick writes: “Greetings! I’ve been a fan of your work for the past two years, but I’ve just started listening to your prockets…” Let’s try that-

**Matt**: You’ve been listening to my prockets?

**Quinns** [embarrassed and angry]: Shut up!

**Matt**: I beg your pardon?

**Quinns** [embarrassed and angry]: Shut up! Shut up!

**Matt**: Get your ears out of my prockets, young man!

**Quinns**: Matthew, stop embarrassing me in front of the intern. Patrick writes: “Greetings! I’ve been a fan of your work for the past two years, but I’ve just started listening to your podcasts,” brackets, “which are delightful-”

**Matt**: Delightful.

**Quinns**: -close brackets. Thanks, Patrick. “I’ve recently moved into a small apartment and need to pick a new dinner table that can satisfy my board game needs. I’ve noticed Quinns’s table expands to accommodate larger games. How has your hobby shaped any philosophies for buying furniture? For example, are round tables better than square ones?”

**Matt**: Mmmm!

**Quinns**: Now you might think, “Quinns I can’t believe you picked this question. It’s so boring.” But the reason why I wanted to read it out is because- Can I just say? Because we travel to America to play board games a fair bit.

**Matt**: Yeah.

**Quinns**: Can Americans stop buying tables that are way too big? Like, come on!

**Matt**: I mean, they’ve got a lot of room, a lot of the time, though.

**Quinns**: I know! And I get it, they can have big tables, I’m not arguing with that. I’m just saying, it’s a stupid idea, for idiots. [Matt laughing] No, because-

**Matt**: Wow.

**Quinns**: Honestly!

**Matt**: Forget about embarrassing yourself in front of the intern. You’re embarrassing yourself in front of the intern...net! [Kylie laughing]

**Quinns** [unimpressed]: Yeah. That’s very good. But here’s the thing, people talk about how my table expands to accommodate large board games, but for me-

**Matt**: Or large meals.

**Quinns**: Or large meals, sure, or large anything. Large crafts projects [**Matt**: Yup.] if I wanted to…

**Matt**: ...get into papier-mâché in a big way?

**Quinns** [laughing]: That’s otherwise known as a midlife crisis. [Matt laughing] But no, people talk about expanding tables to fit big board games. What about the other way to see it, which is shrinking tables so that you can be closer to your friends while playing small board games?

**Matt**: That’s true.

**Quinns**: Which is not getting enough airtime in this hobby. Discuss.

**Kylie**: I don’t like the gaming tables. I don’t like the idea of leaning over my game.

**Quinns**: Mmm. And then your game is sort of sunken and far away from you.

**Kylie**: Yeah, and then not having elbow room, as well. They don’t look like they’ve got a lot of-

**Quinns**: No, you rest your elbows on the table, I believe.

**Kylie** [skeptical]: No, but it’s like a little shelf on top of the table, right?

**Matt**: They’re not too bad. You got some room for elbows. But I do know what you mean about the dip. Usually you’ve got a good six inches of wood before you get into the depths.

**Quinns**: So all I’m saying is, I wanna be close to the game and I wanna be close to my friends, and all of those things require a small table.

**Matt**: Is this a mailbag question or a cry for help?

**Quinns**: Patrick is actually me. [Matt laughing] I wrote this in.

**Matt** [high-pitched wail]: I wanna be close to my friends!

**Quinns**: Honestly, this is something-

**Matt**: No, I’m with you.

**Quinns**: Good.

**Matt**: Just to bury the lede on that one. I’m sorry.

**Quinns**: Just giving me a hard time there.

**Matt**: I’m sorry. Before I give you a hard time for comedy value, I wanna tell you, I agree! I mean I do miss having a gigantic table sometimes. In my house, I technically have a choice of three tables. Three unlockable tables.

**Quinns**: Yeah, and none of them quite fit for- Actually, no, that’s not true.

**Matt**: No, the large one just about does it. But only just.

**Quinns**: Kylie, Matt’s big table is amazing, because it is very long but very narrow.

**Matt**: Yeah, and it means that if you’re playing a big game, often what you have to do is combine the big table with the little table to make one really long, really thin table. [Quinns laughing] But at least you get to be close to your friends, like the Last Supper, but instead of just sitting around one edge of the table, sitting around both sides. Which arguably they should have done! It was his last meal, just have a little cozy one.

**Quinns**: It’s very weird.

**Matt**: Forget about the photo for a minute, guys. Get in, have a buffet.

**Quinns**: Kylie, where do you sit -- pun intended -- on tables?

**Kylie**: I think you have got a pretty special table.

**Quinns**: Yeah, no, it’s the correct table. It’s IKEA, and if anyone wants- People sometimes do-

**Matt**: It is funny. It’s just an IKEA table, but everyone looks at it being like, [amazed voice] “Where did Quinns get this incredible gaming table?”

**Quinns**: It’s literally one of IKEA’s cheapest tables, yeah. No, sorry, it’s good, it’s yeah. I feel like it’s the correct table. I’ve bought it three times. There’s a fun fact for Shut Up & Sit Down fans.

**Matt**: Wow. Is that why it never ages, like Keanu Reeves?

**Quinns**: Yeah, it’s the Keanu Reeves of tables. No, because I had one, and then I had a breakup with a girlfriend, and then I had another, then I moved. This is the third.

**Matt**: [judgy exhale] I can’t believe you bought a table from an old relationship. That’s weird. Does your wife know you bought a table again?

**Kylie**: No, he bought it to replace the relationship.

**Matt**: Yeah, I know, that’s weird.

**Kylie**: Yeah.

**Quinns** [not sure if they’re messing with him]: What? Oh god, no.

**Matt**: Because you had a table that you bought with somebody else in a relationship, and then you bought the same table again?

**Quinns**: I’m losing control of this conversation.

**Matt**: That’s weird, man.

**Quinns**: I’m gonna change to the second point, which is how do we feel [**Matt**: Round tables.] of square versus round tables.

**Kylie**: I think square.

**Quinns**: I think there’s a real love- Because obviously, this is the pizza principle, right? Circular tables are just giving you less surface area. However. I think they’re aesthetically pleasing. I don’t get to play board games on a circular table enough.

**Kylie**: Yeah, but I think circular tables don’t tend to be expandable in a good way.

**Quinns**: Oh no, because then they just become- They get that weird midriff in the middle.

**Matt**: There’s one you can get where it spins out like a Transformer.

**Quinns** [high-pitched]: Whaaaaat?

**Matt**: Yeah. But I think they cost an absolute fortune. I think they’re like super high-end designer things of like, you can just basically pull it and it goes *oooooo* and it rotates like a camera aperture, but then slots in to make it-

**Quinns** [genuine amazement]: Wowww! What?!

**Matt**: Yeah, I mean, that’s like “I’m a millionaire” table, rather than a table that anyone can sensibly buy. But imagine if you could have a table that was small, and square, that then become large, and round. I mean, this is literally like, “Let’s just imagine physics didn’t exist,” [Quinns laughing] but how cool would that be!

**Kylie**: Yeah. That’d be pretty cool.

**Quinns**: But you guys are with me, right? That actually the board game scene is obsessed with square tables, obviously, because that makes some sense for board games, but actually there’s a real aesthetic joy from a circular table? I mean, casinos know this. Casinos are making a lot of circular tables.

**Matt**: Well, they’re great for card games, but for board games it’s incredibly aesthetic *un*pleasing, where if you’re playing a eurogame, and you’ve got- I like to be able to have everything aligned with the edge of the table.

**Kylie**: Yeah, I’m with you on that. My OCD would not allow a- Because then you’ve got a square inside a circle and trying to fit everything around the edge of the circle.

**Quinns**: Oh, yeah, sure. But for games where you’re looking up at people more, like social games or games with talking. Like let’s say we were playing Chinatown. I want a circular table because [**Matt**: Yeah.] it’s weird to have people all at ninety-degree angles, or sat parallel with you.

**Matt**: No, I’m down with that. But I think the small table conversation is one which doesn't get had often enough. Especially, you know, you see photographs sometimes of people in America at big tables playing games, and if they’re not playing a big table-filling game, it just looks a bit lonely.

**Quinns**: It’s so weird.

**Matt**: You’re like, “Your mate’s like five feet away from you!”

**Quinns**: Yup, the game is like an entire arm’s length away from you.

**Matt**: Yeah!

**Quinns**: It’s like, sunken *and* far away.

**Matt**: You should be close enough to mess with other people’s cards in front of them as a joke, if you want to. You won’t do it, but you should be able to.

**Kylie**: Your handful movement there was [laughing] oddly-placed from where I’m sat.

**Matt**: Well…

**Quinns**: Did it look like Matt was reaching over to my…

**Kylie**: Yeah, and then saying, you know, “Messing with your friends,” yeah. [Quinns laughing]

**Matt**: We’ve worked very closely together for a very long time, you know, these things...

**Quinns**: Sometimes we just even forget about the board game. It’s crazy.

**Matt**: It’s true.

**Quinns**: I think, basically, American board game tables are like the Jurassic Park thing of, “They were so focused on whether they could [Matt laughing], they didn’t think about whether they should.”

**Matt**: I’m coming round to it, you know. I think I was frustrated for a long time about the fact that I’ve got a pretty dinky table, but now I have a bigger table, I actually really like just being like- You know, my wife will be like, “Oh, are you not setting up the big table in the front room?” Because it lives in the cellar most of the time. But, “No, I’m just gonna play in the kitchen, on this little table.”

**Quinns**: Yeah!

**Matt**: Because it’s like: Get in the kitchen, get cozy. Sometimes I’ll put a pizza in the oven, just because my house is so cold [Quinns laughing], it’s like free heating.

**Quinns**: Oh I just caused a peak there. That really tickled me.

**Matt**: It’s free heating! I do that, it’s great! You give everyone a bit of pizza, and also you just warmed up this room! Gotta keep the door shut, obviously. It’s the same with having a small collection, though. Sometimes I’m like, “Oh I wish I could have a big board game collection,” but actually…

**Kylie**: Yeah, if you curate it well enough.

**Matt**: Smallness, sometimes, can be nice.

**Quinns**: Marie Kondo would agree with you. We’re all, I think-

**Matt**: Brings me joy! You know what I mean? Brings me joy.

**Quinns**: I just want to be close to my friends, that’s all I’m saying.

## Outro [00:53:22]

**Quinns**: Thank you very much for listening to another episode of the Shut Up & Sit Down podcast, everybody. As always, thank you to Mr. Steve Davit for powering this podcast with the strength of his mighty saxophone. Thank you very much to Kylie Wroe as well, for joining us this episode.

**Kylie**: Thank you for having me.

**Quinns**: And as always, thanks most of all, to you, the listener.

**Matt**: James.

**Quinns**: You specifically, [**Matt**: Bye!] James. Thanks James. Bye James! Love you James, bye!

**Matt**: Bye!

[funky outro music]